



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE BIBLICAL WORLD

CONTINUING

The Old and New Testament Student

VOLUME VIII.

NOVEMBER, 1896

NUMBER 5

ISLAM: A SKETCH WITH BIBLIOGRAPHY.

By Rev. T. WITTON DAVIES, B.A., M.R.A.S., F.A. Inst.,
Principal Midland Baptist College, Nottingham, England.

Introduction: name and number of adherents.—Preparations: degeneracy of native religion; of Jews and Christians;—The Haneefs.—Beginnings. Muhammed and the Haneefs;—the Quran;—The five Pillars of Islam.—History: the Caliphate;—Shiites and Sunnites;—Sects.—The New Islam.—Missions to Islam.—Bibliography.

ACCORDING to Mr. W. H. Abdullah Quilliam¹ there are in the world no fewer than 240 million adherents of the Muhammedan² faith. A religion with such an immense following deserves and demands careful attention, especially from those who are interested in the grand enterprise of Christian missions abroad.

The members of this community call themselves "Muslims," and their religion "Islam." The first is the active participle, fourth form (=Heb. Hiphil) of the Arabic verb *salima*, "to be safe:" in this form "to deliver up," "to resign." So a "Muslim" is one who submits to the divine will. "Islam" is the infinitive or noun of action belonging to this form, and its meaning is "submission" or "resignation;" a suitable designation when one remembers the place held by divine sovereignty

¹ *Faith of Islam*, p. 14.

² This spelling is most in accordance with the Arabic.

among this people. They themselves refuse to be called after Muhammed, because, they hold, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and even Jesus, were believers in this same religion.

Muhammed did not invent in their special sense the words "Muslim" or "Islam." He found ready to hand, alike the words and the main ideas associated with them.

THE PREPARATION.

In Mekka and in Medina, just before the prophet came to the fore, there were earnest bands of men known as Haneefs; a word etymologically meaning "inclined," and capable of having a bad sense—as in Hebrew—or a good one, which it invariably has in the Quran, where it stands for the faithful. I think it is Sprenger who compares these earnest inquirers after truth and righteousness with the Oxford Methodists of the last century. It is to them that Muhammed owed his first religious awakening and the central thoughts and fervor of his earliest theology.

The primitive religion of Arabia was monotheism of a very simple kind. This degenerated in course of time to Sabianism (from *Tsabha*, heavenly host, same root as in Sabaoth), or the worship of sun, moon, and stars, as representing the one God believed in.

Towards the end of the sixth century of our era the indigenuous Arabs who had not embraced Judaism or Christianity worshiped many gods: their Sabianism, however monotheistic at the outset, could hardly issue in anything else. In the Qaaba or sanctuary of Mekka there were over three hundred images of gods. But at the head of these deities was Allah, *the* God, who had his wife Allat, just as other Semitic gods (*cf.* Baal and Ashtoreth) had their wives.

But there was very little genuine faith in Allah or Allat or their numerous subordinates; nor was there much moral earnestness of any kind: faith and morals were dying out, and the gods were used to point jokes just as when among the Greeks and Romans a similar temper prevailed.

There were Jews; but they made more of their Targums than of their Bible, and more of their Talmuds than of either.

According to Muslim accounts, these Jews considered Ezra the full equal of Allah, and no man could think except as he was directed. The Rabbi was as final and beyond appeal in his teaching as is the Pope to the orthodox Roman Catholic today.

The Jew was then, as in some countries he is today, too clever by half; and the dreamy, sensuous Arab was no match in business for his shrewd and diligent kinsman. Often the Jew was more than clever, he was far-reaching and dishonest; not more so than the Arab; nor is he today more so than the Russian or German of these latter enlightened times. But then he was sharper.

Add to the foregoing that the Jew was intensely narrow and bigoted. Jehovah was *his* God and everybody's else enemy. And when the Jew had power—as in the case of Nagush, king of Yemen—he could do his full share of persecution—he *could*, and more, he *did*.

Christianity in those days cut a sorry figure among the Arabs. Ever since Constantine embraced the Christian faith the world had entered into the church with a vengeance. Previously, as some writer has it, the chapels were wooden and the churches golden. Now the chapels had become golden, but, alas! the churches had become wooden. Immorality followed in the wake of luxury. The priests lived for what they could get, and, indeed, took more than they had a right to. They were debauched as well, and then, as always, it was like minister, like people.

Then what deplorable errors, and yet more deplorable dissensions, had crept into the church! Saints and images took the place of God: Mary the Virgin was raised to the level of a goddess; Allah and Mary were likened to Osiris and Isis; and Christ the Child was looked upon, by outsiders, at least, as answering to Horus. The Madonna with Child has indeed been alleged to be only the counterpart of Horus on the lap of Isis, as these last may be seen among the Egyptian antiquities of all our museums.

The church was all sixes and sevens as to the difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee, and the alteration of the diphthong of a word was made to land the evildoer in everlast-

ing flame. These Christians cared immeasurably more about hair-splitting definitions than about showing in their conduct the love and goodness of Jesus Christ.

The Haneefs sincerely longed for a truer and better faith than they saw around them, and they endeavored to find it. Monotheism was made the basis of their faith. Jewish rabbinism and Christian tri-theism—into which the Trinity had been reduced—they equally rejected. They were largely influenced by the Essenes, the Christian Sabians (from *Tsabh'ang*, "to baptize"), and by the Anchorites. They had also, probably, learned something from the Magi of Persia, many of whom were earnest mystics.

The religion of these Haneefs was a very simple one; indeed they hardly had a theology at all. They worshiped Allah and no other, and their monotheism was perhaps more absolute and uncompromising than even Muhammed's, for the prophet reduced the subordinates of Allah to Jinns, who had special powers and prerogatives. These reformers were upright, earnest, unworldly, and much of their time was spent in prayer and contemplation.

In this movement we have the beginnings of Muhammedism—indeed almost all that was good in it can be traced in Haneefism. But a man of fervor and of force was needed to unite, inform, and inspire the new movement, just as Wesley was needed to make Oxford Methodism a permanent and vigorous institution. Muhammed was just the man that the place and the hour called for.

THE BEGINNINGS.

Waraqa was a leading Haneef, and as he was a relation of Khadijah, Muhammed's wife, the prophet became very intimate with him, and from him learned the essential principles of these Arabian Methodists. Muhammed joined the Haneefs, and threw himself heart and soul into their affairs. He was as religious, as mystic, as contemplative as any one of them, but he was more vehement and more passionate. He has been said by different authorities to have been epileptic, cataleptic, or hysterical. His feelings were, in any case, easily moved. When highly excited

he imagined he saw visions in which Allah spoke to him. His wife Khadijah, Ali his nephew, and others, took the same view of these visions : and the number who believed Muhammed the subject of divine revelation gradually increased.

It is agreed that at first the prophet was sincere. He believed that in these ecstasies of his God did verily speak to him.

Waraqah was originally a Jew, and from him Muhammed learned most of what he knew of the Old Testament.

Through his personal and commercial intercourse with Christians he had acquired considerable knowledge of the New Testament. But his knowledge of both was extremely and, at times, ridiculously inexact, as even a careless reading of the Quran will show.

It is impossible in this short outline to follow into detail the life and religious development of Muhammed. In a short time he tacked onto the basal truth of Haneefism—monotheism—the dogma, “that Muhammed is the prophet of Allah.” One is often told that the creed of Islam is extremely simple, as comprehending but two principles—“one God ;” “Muhammed his prophet.” True, but this last includes the teaching of the prophet ; a belief in the infallibility, if not the eternity, of the Quran, with all its puerilities and even contradictions. Of course the contradictions of the book are explained by saying that later revelations canceled preceding ones. Whatever new article of faith or rule of conduct the prophet wished to adopt, there was at once a fresh division, and the desired course was sanctioned. It is possible that in all this seesaw business Muhammed was sincere. Human nature has, as human beings can tell, wonderful capabilities. But it is not easy to believe that the wild, often incoherent and inconsistent, utterances of the Quran, the gross ignorance it shows of Bible history, its constant repetitions—it is not easy to believe that all these are the product of divine or even of a very superior human wisdom.

The style of the Quran has been praised. It is certainly pure in its diction ; there are very few loan words such as one meets in the *Thousand and One Nights*. It is charged with intense passion in most of its parts, and there is in an unusual degree

that swinging rhythm which is so native to the Arabic. But in Arabic or in English it makes very dull reading, and it has little interest except to the student of the history of religion. No one who has been a student both of the Hebrew Old Testament and of the Arabic Quran can fail to be struck with the immeasurable inferiority of the latter. To believe Muhammed to be the prophet of Allah is to accept this book as one divinely dictated; it is to impeach God's common sense, if that phrase can be so used.

The five pillars or foundations of Islam are said to be these:

1. Reciting Kalimet or confession, "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammed is the prophet of Allah."
2. Prayer five times a day.
3. Almsgiving.
4. Fast of Rammadan.
5. Pilgrimage to Mekka.

Then, to be a good Muslim, you must say *Yes* to the prophet's endorsement of slavery, of polygamy, of easy divorce, of the use of the sword in defense of the faith, of love indeed to brother Muslims, but of death-hate to others. To be of the Muhammedan religion, even in its founder's life time, meant the swallowing of a goodly sized creed.

HISTORY.

Up to the time of Muhammed's death there was no formal division in Islam, nor was there for some years after. The first important dissension arose in connection with the succession to the Caliphate. Ali, son-in-law and nephew of the prophet, was passed by in favor of Abu Beker, Omar, and Othman; but at length he became Caliph. He was, however, soon assassinated, as were his sons Hassan and Hussain. Then there reigned, for seven hundred years or more, the Ommayyads and Abbasids. The supporters of Ali's claims formed the Shiite (from *Shia*, "a party") sect, which remains up to this present time. Besides regarding the first three Caliphs as impostors and making Ali, some say, the equal of Allah, they reject the enormous traditions which the rival sect has accumulated. They are in this respect

to be compared with the Qaraite Jews (from Hebrew *Qara*, "to read"), who keep to the letter of Scripture, refusing to recognize the validity or claims of the Talmuds or Midrashes. The Persians and many of the Tartar and Indian Muslims are Shiites.

The Sunnites (from *Sunnat*, "a way of life," "right way") are found mainly in Egypt, Arabia, Turkey and in India.¹

Under the Abbasid Caliphs, these Sunnites branched off into four sects, all of which are found at the present day. These are not always and necessarily hostile. Often members of all the sects will meet and worship in the same mosks, especially in Morocco. Yet, far more than is the case between the Askenazim and Sephardim Jews, there are considerable differences and bitterness of feeling between these factions.

The sects referred to are these:

1. The *Haneefites*. These have an affinity with the Shiites in allowing more freedom of thought, and in attaching less importance to traditions than their rivals. The few Muhammedans in England—Liverpool, etc.—belong to the Haneefites; and, judging from Syed Ameer Ali's book, they prevail in India.

2. The *Shafites* are confined to Arabia and a portion of southern India.

3. The *Malikites* are found in Barbary and in some other parts of Africa, and they are characterized by their literal interpretation of the Quran.

4. The *Hanbalites* believed the Quran to be eternal, everlasting, and unchangeable; they are strict in their orthodoxy and in their austerity of life. You will find Hanbalites in South Arabia. Wahabeeism² is an offshoot of this sect, though it has spread likewise to India.

A NEW DEVELOPMENT.

It would be unfair to close this rapid sketch without alluding to what has been called "New Islam," the supporters of which

¹ Sir W. W. Hunter says that nine-tenths of the Indian Muslims are Sunnites or, as he spells the word, Sunnes. *Vide The Indian Muslims*, p. 117.

² Sir W. W. Hunter describes the Wahabees as an "advanced division of the Sunnis—the Puritans of Islam." *The Indian Muslims*, p. 53.

belong almost wholly to India. They reject the views commonly held by Muslims, and may be described as Muhammedan rationalists. They maintain that the Muslim of the nineteenth century was never intended to be ruled by the Muslim of the ninth century. The Quran was the standard of thought and life for its own age only. Muslim civilization and philosophy have stagnated just because the true function of the Quran was misconceived. Neither its legal precepts nor its ethics were intended to be final.

To understand the origin of this movement, remember that it arose in India where the influence of the missionary, of the British ruler, and of the universities is greatly felt. The educated Indian Muslim sees plainly enough that orthodox Islamism can never stand before the light of the new knowledge. Where the Quran is made a final code of ethics, of legislation, of religion, true progress is impossible; and the actual history of Muslim peoples bears out this statement.

"New Islam" is said by its promoters to be a mere going back to the teaching of Muhammed and of his first followers. In the preface to his *Life and Teaching of Muhammed*, Syed Ameer Ali describes his book, which is the ablest literary product of this school, as an "exposition of the spirit of Islam as it was understood by the immediate descendants of the Teacher" [the capital T is the author's].

I have been told by my friend, Mr. Quilliam, editor of *Islamic World* and *The Crescent*, that *New Islamism* is finding general sympathy among Muslims. It is impossible not to be reminded of a similar trend of thought among Jews (*e. g.*, Reformed Judaism) and among Christians.

In Islam the church and the state are but one institution differently regarded. Muhammed and his Caliphs, down to the present Sultan of Turkey, have been civil rulers and religious heads: chief in church and in state. Islam, when and where in power, knows nothing of a condition of things in which equal freedom is allowed to all religions. In the beginning, especially, Muhammedanism was more political than religious. It was love of conquest, of gain, of fighting for fighting's sake,

that prompted the first warriors of Islam; and the same has been ever after true, as far as practicable. I have myself, when traveling in Palestine off the beaten tracks, come across Arabs who knew the least imaginable about Muslim or any other religion; yet they well understood their political relationship to other Muslims and to the Turkish state.

I will close this very fragmentary article by urging upon intending missionaries to Muslim peoples the importance of a thorough acquaintance with the history and principles of this great religion. Especially should they understand the exact views of those among whom they are to labor. And, instead of attacking Islam wholly and unqualifiedly, is it not a more excellent way frankly to acknowledge the good that there is in Muhammed and his religion? Besides the fact that this is manly, fair, and Christlike, it would issue in greater and better results than past labors among Muslims can show. Let it be ungrudgingly admitted that some reform was needed when Muhammed appeared, and a thousand times better than the Judaism or Christianity of his day and of his country was the faith he promulgated.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

1. *Mahomet and Islam.* By Sir William Muir. Published by Relig. Tract Society. Price 4s.
2. *The Caliphate: Its Rise, Decline, and Fall.* Same author and publisher. Price 9s.
3. *Life of Muhammed.* By A. Sprenger, M.D. Allahabad, 1851. My copy cost 5s., secondhand, in Leipsic. A valuable book, though smaller and less satisfactory than the German work to be named afterwards.
4. *Islam.* By Stobart.
5. *Islam as a Missionary Religion.* By Haines. Both these last, published by S.P.C.K. at 2s. 6d., belong to the "Non-Christian Religious Systems" series.
6. *Natural History of Islam.* By Dr. J. M. Arnold. 1859. 8vo, pp. 524. Contains a mass of useful information, but the writer plays too much the rôle of advocate.

7. *Studies in Mohammedanism*. By J. L. Pool. 1892. Price 5s. net (contains good general account).

8. *Life of Mohammed*. By Syed Ameer Ali. Williams & Norgate. 1873. 12mo, pp. 346. (The new work by this author is much larger and fuller.)

9. *Faith of Islam*. By W. H. Quilliam. Price 6d.

10. *The Religion of the Sword*. Same author. Vol. I., price 2s. 6d., only out as yet. Both these works to be had from the Crescent Printing Company, Liverpool. I recommend the last three as giving in English the views of Muslims about their own faith. They say all the good there can be said without touching on the bad; especially is Mr. Quilliam guilty of this.

The following articles are strongly recommended:

"Mohammedanism" in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, ninth edition: articles by Professors Wellhausen, Stanislaus-Guyard, and Nöldeke. That by the last writer is on the Quran, and has been reproduced, with some changes, in his *Sketches of Eastern History*. (A. & C. Black. 10s. 6d.).

Deutsch's *Literary Remains*, Article II, "Islam."

Dr. Marcus Dod's *Mohammed, Buddha, and Christ*. A very lucid and fair book. Price 3s. 6d.

Sale's *Introduction to the Quran*, mostly got from Maracci's larger work, must be read and studied. But I prefer Rodwell's version to any other. Professor Palmer's is readable, but it is not close enough to the original, and I have found whole clauses missing.